

PD – 6: Central Shenandoah

Introduction

The Central Shenandoah Planning District (PD 6) was named for its geographic location in the heart of Virginia's famous Shenandoah Valley. The district comprises Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge and Rockingham counties; the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton and Waynesboro; and the towns of Bridgewater, Broadway, Craigsville, Dayton, Elkton, Glasgow, Goshen, Grottoes, Monterey, Mount Crawford and Timberville.

The Central Shenandoah Planning District has a total area of approximately 3,437 square miles. The Blue Ridge Mountains form the eastern boundary and the Allegheny range lies along the western part of the region. Nestled between these mountains, Virginia's Shenandoah Valley contains beautiful and diverse landscapes of fertile farmland, rolling fields and forests. The South Fork of the Shenandoah River flows through the valley, creating opportunities for fishing, swimming, canoeing and camping. Many of the headwater streams that form the North and South forks of the Shenandoah River originate in Augusta and Highland counties. To the south, the James River cuts through the corner of Rockbridge County. Numerous streams in Augusta, Highland and Bath counties form the headwater sections of the James River system.

According to the 2000 Census, more than 258,750 people live in the region. For the district, this represents about a 15% increase from the 1990 census numbers. The population projections for 2005 are dramatic with a projected growth since 2000 up to about 31%. This region is filled with contrasts of significant population growth in some counties to population loss in others. From the estimated 269,400 population in 2005 to 292,600 in 2020, the projected population increase will be only 8.6%. With the increase in mega-agriculture and industry the landscape of PD 6 is changing. This is creating a change in demographic composition as well. While PD 6 has below the state average of minorities, the Hispanic population has grown significantly in Harrisonburg and is approaching the state average in Rockingham County and Waynesboro. Recreational planners need to address divergent cultural impacts on their resources.

Outdoor Recreation

Overall, a statewide shift showing reduced outdoor recreation participation rates across all activity areas surveyed in the 2006 Outdoors Survey across the state reflects reduced leisure time and more complicated lives. While the activity participation is most effected by population changes in a geographic region, the resources and interests of residents and visitors affect the ability of a region to meet recreational demand. Based on the findings of the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* (VOS), the top ten most popular outdoor activities in PD 6 are walking for pleasure, swimming (all types), driving for pleasure, jogging and running, fishing, hunting, using a playground, visiting natural areas, sunbathing, and bicycling, respectively. Walking for pleasure is ranked the most popular activity in the region and state. Other activity rankings in the region are different from the statewide rankings. For example, the demand for hunting has dropped dramatically across the state, but the region has realized an increase in participation. Bicycling is included in the top ten activities for the region and is ranked 13th statewide.

Walking and jogging trails are most needed throughout this region in locations close to home. Access to recreational waters is also needed in this region, especially for lake related activities. Although not in the top ten activities, tent camping facilities is the third highest shortfall in facilities. Even though hunting is growing in participation, there remain ample tracts of land to support this activity within this region. Surplus lands for hunting are likely used by populations traveling to the region for hunting expeditions. [See Table __, page __](#)¹ for a more comprehensive look at the 2006 Demand-Supply-Needs Analysis.

The results of the 2006 Demand-Supply-Needs Analysis for PD 6 indicate a surplus of park and open space lands, developed campsites, and hiking/backpacking trails. This abundance is due mainly to vast natural resources and outdoor recreational facilities available on state and federal lands. Many of the activities showing a surplus of facilities in the region are actually at capacity due to visitors and tourists from outside the region increasing recreational demands.

Federal, state and local land holdings in PD 6 provide many varieties of natural and recreational opportunities. Other recreational attractions include The Virginia Horse Center near Lexington, which attracts equine enthusiasts from throughout the mid-Atlantic region, local celebrations and the Highland Maple Festival increase in popularity every year, as do the regional recreational areas of Natural Chimneys and Grand Caverns.

The following recommendations relative to resources in the region could contribute to regional open space and/or recreational opportunities for meeting current and future needs of area residents and visitors.

Specific needs identified in PD 6 are:

- Trails for walking, fitness and bicycling close to home
- Water access primarily for fishing and swimming
- Parks with tent camping
- Additional basketball facilities
- Multipurpose fields for soccer, football, baseball, softball and other field sports
- Additional volleyball courts
- Playgrounds close to home
- Additional tennis courts
- Off-road motorcycling and four-wheel driving

The following are general recommendations for meeting outdoor recreation needs in the region:

- Better serve Latino and Spanish speaking cultural groups, it is important to: establishing trust relationships. Hire bilingual staff and advertise in the Spanish media. Host Latino-themed events. Create programs with the community, not for them. Invite, involve and include Hispanics in all aspects of service delivery. Similar strategies are effective for other cultural groups.
- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages.
- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to avoid overuse of facilities planned for rural populations.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management, and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.

¹ All sections with Blue/darker highlighting indicate lacking information.

- Activity user groups, along with local parks and recreation departments, should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others and the resources to minimize user conflicts, and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state, and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! Skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.
- Create tourist-friendly road and trail maps for cycling, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing and scenic driving highlighting the natural resources of the region.

Land Conservation

Large numbers of public lands are protecting much of the open space in PD 6. Federal holdings total more than 618,170 acres, and include the Shenandoah National Park and George Washington and Jefferson National Forest. The Appalachian Trail and its land holdings skirt the eastern boundary of the region. Douthat State Park, state-owned wildlife management areas, forests and other state resources contribute an additional 66,132 + acres of valuable open space. Other private and semi-public entities provide additional protection through conservation easements on _____ acres.

The land conservation map for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms (See [Chapter III](#). Land Conservation).

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Land Trusts Operating in PD 6:

- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- James River Association
- Potomac Conservancy
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
- Valley Conservation Council
- Rockbridge Area Conservation Council

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General recommendations for land conservation include:

- To meet the Chesapeake Bay Agreement goal for watershed protection, and Governor Kaine's stated goal of preserving 400,000 acres of land in the state by 2010, strong state tax incentives for land conservation should be maintained, and a dedicated funding source should be established by the General Assembly.

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in Chapter III. **Land Conservation**. As population growth accelerates, development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.
- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.
- Land conservation projects should offer a wide range of public benefits including water quality protection, habitat preservation, and public access.

Specific land conservation recommendations for this region include:

- Localities that lie within the viewshed of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive and the Appalachian Trail should work to protect the scenic views. The National Park Service has developed viewshed management and landscape design guidelines that may be useful in this endeavor.
 - Encourage development away from mountaintops to protect significant scenic views.
 - Provide adequate protection for existing farmland and/or create farmland preserve.
 - Continue to maintain the rural and agriculture landscape and viewsheds through increased applications of conservation easements.
- 1) Protect agricultural lands along **Dry River**.
 - 2) Preserve and protect roadless areas within the **Shenandoah Mountains**.
 - 3) Protect the visual quality of land surrounding the **McDowell Battlefield** via landscape preservation easements and agricultural preservation efforts.
 - 4) Protect the lands adjacent to **Skyline Drive**, the **Appalachian Trail** and the **BRP**.

Green Infrastructure Recommendations

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV.

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning tools.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.
- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative and other programs.
- Support **Rockingham County's Comprehensive Plan** for designating greenways along 100-year flood plans.

Programs

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access,

Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails and Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging, or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross-jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public.

- 5) The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its member clubs need voluntarily to continue working with federal, state and local governments, as well as numerous individual landowners, to solve problems associated with the acquisition, development, administration, management and maintenance of the **Appalachian Trail**, an existing National Scenic Trail, and its connecting trails.
- 6) Complete development of the **Great Eastern Trail** through the Alleghany Mountains. The Great Eastern Trail will link existing trails from central Alabama to central New York along the Allegheny Highlands.
- 7) The **James River Heritage Trail** is proposed to follow America's Founding River from the Chesapeake Bay to the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The trail follows the old Kanawha Canal towpath, park trails, scenic riverside roadways and urban riverfront trails deep into the heart of Virginia.

Trail and Greenway Recommendations:

- Local governments should have greenways and trails components in their comprehensive plan, which that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives, and connect to key recreational and cultural facilities.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.
- Develop a system of equestrian trails in the region.
- Utilize old logging roads for mountain biking and equestrian trails.

- Encourage partnerships with private landowners for multi-use trail use by the public.

Specific Trail and Greenway recommendations include:

- 8) Connect a regional network of trails from the City of Waynesboro and Augusta County to the **Crozet Tunnel** at Afton Mountain.
- 9) Continue to manage, maintain and protect **Appalachian Trail** is an existing National Scenic Trail.
- 10) Support development of the **Alleghany Highlands Horse Trail**, a 45-mile system connecting trails in George Washington National Forest in Alleghany and Bath Counties with trails in Douthat State Park.
- 11) Develop a horse-drawn buggy/bikeway along **Rt. 42** from Dayton to Harrisonburg; add shoulders that can accommodate bikes.
- 12) Implement and support of a bicycle trail system that **connects the ten Civil War Battlefields** in the region.
- 13) Complete the **Blacks Run Greenway and Liberty Park** in Harrisonburg.
- 14) Consideration should be given to the development of the **North River Trail**, a linear rails-to-trails park utilizing the abandoned Chesapeake Western railway corridor along the North River and Mossy Creek from North River Gorge to Bridgewater in Augusta and Rockingham counties and connecting the Shenandoah National Park to the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest.
- 15) A **Staunton to Harrisonburg Rail-with-Trail** could be developed along the former Norfolk Southern railroad corridor now owned by the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, a short line operator. The lower traffic volumes would seem to make a shared corridor more acceptable to the various user groups.
- 16) The **Clifton Forge to Staunton to Waynesboro** (Charlottesville) segment of the CSX Railroad was proposed for abandonment several years ago. The line is still active and was used by the Railroad Historical Society for fall color excursions, which became popular events. However, technical difficulties forced the group to cancel the excursions, but they are working to restore the popular trips. The corridor could be considered for rail with trail usage now and rail trail conversion should the line be abandoned.
- 17) Implement development of the **Jackson River Scenic Trail** as a greenway/blueway of 17-mile length from Alleghany County to Lake Moomaw and extending into Highland County.
- 18) Support plans to develop a **10-mile river/trail system** that would link Brushy Hills, Woods Creek Trail, Jordans Point Park, the Chessie Nature Trail, Maury River Walk, Glen Maury Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Create a **connector to the Kanawha Canal and Glasgow**.
- 19) Expand the use and distance of the **Chessie Trail** to link the Blue Ridge Parkway to Brushy Hill Preserve as part of the 18-mile **Brushy Blue Greenway** and to accommodate horses and mountain bikes.
- 20) Support plans to develop a **trail/greenway system** along the Maury River; including a pedestrian bridge over the river to connect Glen Maury Park with downtown Buena Vista along the existing riverwalk trails.
- 21) Support plans to extend **Brushy Hill Trail** system west to the national forest lands.
- 22) Assess the potential to develop the open space contained on the **Cyrus McCormick Farm** for greenway/recreational purposes.
- 23) Develop a **greenway from Glasgow Landing** (confluence of Maury and James River) to Glasgow Park.
- 24) Develop a plan for a multi-use trail around **Lake Moomaw** of about 20 miles in length.
- 25) Implement, adopt, review and update trail and greenway plans to insure applicability.
 - Blacks Run Greenway
 - Waynesboro Greenway Plan
 - Central Shenandoah Valley Greenways Plan
- 26) Develop the **Staunton Frontier Trail system** linking the Museum of Frontier Culture to Betsy Bell and Gypsy Hill parks. This could also link other state facilities, including, but not limited to, Western State Hospital, Blue Ridge Community Center, etc.

Blueways & Water Access

Water Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.
- Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles.

27) Implement development of the **Jackson River Scenic Trail** blueway from Alleghany County to Lake Moomaw and extending into Highland County.

28) Support efforts to remove the **Deadhead Dam** on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River.

Water Access Recommendations

- Identify and develop appropriate water access opportunities to the public waters and free-flowing recreational rivers in the region.
- As more public water access achieved, create clean up days and education on litter and dumping to preserve water quality for all users.

29) Additional public water access opportunities are needed on **Maury** and **James Rivers** in Rockbridge County.

30) Provide additional water access on the **South Fork of the Shenandoah River**.

31) **Larger headwater streams** of Highland and Bath counties need additional public access sites. .

Historic and Landscape Resources

The Central Shenandoah Valley is a major tourist destination for visitors from throughout the country who are attracted by the region's many natural and historic resources. Nationally known resorts, such as the historic Homestead, are popular destinations offering year-round opportunities such as snow skiing and championship golf courses. The Museum of American Frontier Culture near Staunton has become a major attraction for the region.

All the localities in this region have resources on the National Register of Historic Places, including a number of historic districts that date back to the first settlement in the area. The entire region is dotted with historic villages, farms, and inns. Since the area has remained largely rural, most of these historic sites have retained a high degree of integrity.

General Historic and Landscape Resources recommendations include:

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.

- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.

Specific Historic and Landscape Resources recommendations include:

- 32) Implement the 2000 **Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District** Management Plan, which promotes the protection and continued appreciation of the historic, cultural, and natural resources that are associated with the battlefields and are important to the people of the region, the Shenandoah Valley and the nation.
- 33) Designate the historic **Valley Road**, Route 11, as a Virginia Scenic Byway, develop a corridor management plan, and create a historic district for the protection of the scenic corridor. Develop a plan to make it eligible for National Scenic Byway designation.
- 34) Develop a **heritage trail** system to commemorate the founding of Jamestown as part of the 2007 celebration: include the canal system and the Chessie Nature Trail.
- 35) Develop a plan for promoting the **Staunton to Parkersburg Pike** as a valuable historic cultural and economic asset for the region.
- 36) Protect the visual quality of land surrounding the **McDowell Battlefield** via landscape preservation easements and agricultural preservation efforts.
- 37) Promote and expand the usage of **Brown's Gap**, a historic road that leads from Grottoes to the Shenandoah Park.

38) Protection of the **Port Republic Battlefield**.

Scenic Resources Recommendations

Management of Virginia's scenic resources is linked to economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents. It also reflects the ecological health of the region.

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.
- Localities that lie within the viewshed of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian Trail should work at a regional level creating a scenic overlay zone adjacent to and within the viewshed to protect the scenic views.
- Encourage development away from mountaintops to protect significant scenic views.
- Timber harvesting plans should include consideration of impacts on key viewsheds.
- Protect viewsheds to rivers from public facilities; including trails.
- Continue to maintain the rural and agriculture landscape and viewsheds through increased applications of conservation easements.
- Strengthen local comprehensive plans and create special land use regulations that protect and preserve unique scenic resources in the area.
- Create scenic overlooks and vista cuts along scenic byways to enhance the visual experience of traveling.

- 39) Continue efforts to protect the natural and scenic resources of **Skyline Drive, Blue Ridge Parkway** and the **George Washington- Jefferson National Forest**. Local governments should support efforts to encourage adjacent landowners, localities and planning district commissions to develop a scenic overlay zone adjacent to

and within the viewshed of the **Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive** as part of a multi-regional parkway viewshed planning process.

40) Localities that host the **Appalachian Trail** should be cognizant of protecting viewsheds from existing and proposed overlooks as well as other scenic values of the corridor. Create a natural buffer between the trail and adjacent development.

41) Protect the scenic aspects of **Interstate 81**, as the American Automobile Association and other groups recognize it as a scenic highway, which acts as an attractive gateway to the state.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Many scenic road corridors have been changing as forests and farmsteads are converted into more developed land uses. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection.

Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII.

On September 22, 2005, for the first time ever four new national byway designations were given to Virginia roads. The Blue Ridge Parkway, a portion that is in PD 6, was given the highest designation as an All-American Road. Skyline Drive, also within PD 6, received National Scenic Byway status. These designations allow localities along the routes to access federal dollars for byway corridor projects, see funding chapter. These major scenic highways attract tourists from throughout the nation, as well as international visitors. The character of the BRP, as well as some sections of Skyline Drive, has been altered from that of a pastoral scene to landscapes that are sometimes marked by incompatible development. Overlooks that once featured breathtaking vistas of farmsteads or forest now reveal factories and exploding suburban residential development. In some cases, subdivisions are being developed within a few hundred feet of these magnificent corridors. As development continues to expand in these sensitive areas, there will be major impacts on the quality of the visitor experience.

Following are general recommendations for scenic roads:

- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.
- The DGIF should continue to work with regional and local governments and other organizations to encourage additional marketing and enhancements to Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail sites. Ecotourism is an important component in promoting natural resource conservation.
- Those communities along the national byways should consider strengthening local comprehensive plans and creating special zoning regulations that will take into account the unique scenic and economic benefits associated with the scenic values of the BRP and Skyline Drive and their viewsheds.

42) Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.

43) Develop comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances to ensure that the intrinsic value of the parkway and its viewsheds are conserved.

Specific roads to be studied are recommended for into the Virginia Byways Program:

44) Designate the historic **Valley Road**, Route 11, as a Virginia Scenic Byway.

45) Develop a Visitor Information Center in the vicinity of I-64, **Skyline Drive** and **Blue Ridge Parkway**.

46) Support plans for the development of the **Mountain Waters Byway** promoting scenic Route 39 from Lexington to the West Virginia Line.

- 47) **Route 250** in Highland and Augusta Counties from the West Virginia state line to Route 42 at Churchville.
- 48) **Route 220** in Highland and Bath Counties.
- 49) **Route 42** in, Augusta, and Rockbridge Counties from Route 39 to Rockingham County near Harrisonburg (in PD 7).
- 50) **Route 84** in Highland County.
- 51) **Route 656** in Augusta County.
- 52) **Route 256** in Augusta County.
- 53) **Route 780** in Rockbridge County.
- 54) **Route 252**, from near Staunton to the intersection with Route 39 in Rockbridge County.
- 55) **Route 608** in Rockbridge and Augusta Counties, from near Buena Vista to the intersection with Route 340 at Stuarts Draft.
- 56) **Route 60** in Rockbridge County between Buena Vista and the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- 57) **Route 251** from Lexington to Collierstown.

Scenic Rivers

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, biodiversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. A discussion about the program's benefits and process are found in the Scenic Rivers subsection of [chapter VII](#). River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In PD 6 Saint Marys River is designated as a scenic river.

In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general recommendations are given:

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.
- Segments of the **Bullpasture, Cowpasture, Jackson, North and St. Mary's** rivers, as well as **Back Creek**, have been identified in the Forest Service's Revised Land and Resource Management Plan as eligible for consideration for potential federal Wild and Scenic River designation. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Forest Service will work together to determine suitability.

Specific recommendations for Virginia Scenic Rivers include:

Portions of the following river segments are desirable as Virginia Scenic River:

- 58) The **Calfpasture River** in from Marble Valley to the Maury River.
- 59) The **Jackson River** from its headwaters to Lake Moomaw.
- 60) The **James River** from Springwood to Glasgow in Rockbridge County.
- 61) The **Maury River** from Limekiln to Lexington.

The following river segments should be evaluated to determine suitability as a Virginia Scenic River:

- 62) **Back Creek** from Sunrise to Blowing Springs.
- 63) The **Cowpasture River** from Patma to Route 39.
- 64) The **Calfpasture River** from Route 250 to Marble Valley.
- 65) The entire **Maury River**.
- 66) The **South Fork of the Shenandoah River** in Rockingham County.
- 67) **Laurel Fork** within Highland County.

Watershed Resources

PD 6 is split between the James River watershed, which flows into the Chesapeake Bay, and the Potomac River watershed, which also flows into the Chesapeake Bay. Currently, the Chesapeake Bay Act does not cover PD 6; therefore, PD 6 does not have mandated development controls.

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Watershed groups operating in PD 6:

- Shenandoah Public Water Forum
 - (List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft)
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General watershed recommendation:

- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

- Outdoors Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.
- Federal, state, regional, and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.
- Federal, state, regional, and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.
- Provide education, especially for landowners adjacent to public open space, on the value of outdoor recreation and conserving lands.
- Educate on the real vs. perceived value of open space and corridor preserves.
- Provide education programs on how to use the land and public facilities, including 'Leave Na Trace.'

Federal Facilities

National Parks Recommendations

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.

68) Develop a **Blue Ridge Visitor Information Center/Services Center** in the vicinity of I-64 near the intersection with Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway to serve the millions of Shenandoah National Park and BRP visitors. A partnership among the National Park Service, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the Commonwealth of Virginia and surrounding localities could be created to plan, build and operate a complex near Rockfish Gap or Afton Mountain that would complement the visitor center envisioned in the Shenandoah Battlefield National Historic District.

69) Implement the resource management plan for **Shenandoah National Park** to deal with user conflicts and threats to the park's environment. Outbreaks of diseases or infestation by insects, along with poor air quality have jeopardized the quality of the experience and the health of the forestlands. Additional pressures are being placed on the perimeter of the park where the resolution of land use conflicts at the park boundaries is critical.

70) BRP and adjacent localities should continue to collaborate on enhancing heritage tourism and guiding community gateway development and growth.

National Forests (USFS) Recommendations

The U. S. Forest Service should:

- Continue to develop new partnerships to market recreational opportunities and rural economic development through tourism; work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia's Blue Ridge Highlands Tourism, Inc., and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to develop regional and international marketing strategies to showcase Virginia's outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Continue to place program emphasis on areas designated by Congress such as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Wilderness Areas.
- Develop a trail plan for the **George Washington and Jefferson Forest** that addresses the needs of all trail users through additional loop trails, and improved maintenance and management, while including all potential user groups in the planning process.

71) **The George Washington and Jefferson National Forest's** goals and objectives state that the forest will operate using a balanced approach for resource based programs, recreation and conservation. There will be additional facilities provided during the life of the plan, including trails, camping, water access, natural resource interpretation and environmental education. Implementation of these recommendations could provide new and improved recreational opportunities for forest visitors. Support the aspects of the Land and Resources Management Plan, which calls for additional facilities within the national forest; including trails, camping, water access, natural resource interpretation and environmental education.

72) There is a demand for major trail improvements on the multi-user trail system in the **Dry River and Deerfield Ranger districts** of the George Washington National Forest. This 200 mile plus system of trails is a mix of purpose built trails, service roads, fire breaks, and users created trail. As use has increased the unsustainable nature of many of the current trail alignments has resulted in erosion and tread damage. The current trail conditions and a lack of loop opportunities are discouraging new users, degrading the recreation experience, and causing resource damage.

73) Maintain the wilderness experience with the **James River Face and Thunder Ridge Wilderness Areas**.

74) Obtain public access via the management plan to the **Rough Mountain Wilderness Area**.

75) **Lake Moomaw** and the surrounding lands are administered under a cooperative arrangement among the Forest Service, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Because of the lake's enormous popularity and the variety of available recreational facilities, some areas are getting overcrowded. Additional developments are being considered and should be provided, including a visitor center, expanded campground, a new group camp and additional trails.

State Facilities

State Parks

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement, which has been handled in 2 ways. First, an advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, is developed to participate through the entire development process of a state park master plan. Second, public meetings are held several times during the process to gain public input and the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation

is open to the public. Any significant change to the plan or additions, the cost of which is in excess of \$500,000, requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

76) Implement the **Douthat State Park** Master Plan, which recommends additional developments for the park. These include: enhancing the existing cabins, adding to or improving the camping facilities, developing additional equestrian and pedestrian trail opportunities, and providing environmental education/visitor information facilities.

77) A state park has been proposed for the **central Shenandoah Valley** in either Augusta or Rockingham County. The site could take advantage of the scenic, cultural and historic resources, as well as the unique natural resources of the region.

78) Incorporate **Natural Chimneys and Grand Cavern Regional Parks** into the state parks system, develop a master plan, and provide adequate funding facilities bring the facilities up to state park standards and provide for staffing and operating requirements.

State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) Recommendations

- The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for nature study, birdwatching, hunting, and fishing.
- DGIF should also acquire additional lands wherever feasible to provide additional access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.
- Support DGIF Birding and Wildlife Trail program.

79) DGIF should continue to investigate opportunities at the **Gathright WMA, Highland WMA, and Goshen-Little North Mountain WMA** to acquire in-holdings and to improve the area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation.

80) Consider expanding the recreational services in the **Little North Mountain Wildlife Management Area** to include other forms of recreation such as hiking and nature study programs.

State Forests Recommendations

- DOF will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

Natural Areas

Natural area preserves within this planning district are Cowbane Prairie, Mount Joy Pond and Folly Mills Fen in Augusta County and Deep Run Ponds in Rockingham County. The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of November 2006, documented 1128 occurrences of 342 rare species and natural communities in the Central Shenandoah Planning District. Twenty of these species are globally rare and five are federally threatened or endangered. One hundred eighty-four conservation sites have been identified in the district; 130 (71%) have received some level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations. However, only **XX** sites are protected well enough to ensure the long-term viability of the rare species and natural communities they support.

DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve. Within the Central Shenandoah Planning District, DCR is particularly interested in protecting:

- Protect significant caves and karst areas.
- Protect Shenandoah Valley sinkhole pond communities and other biologically significant wetlands.
- Localities should continue to work with the NPS to acquire land for the protection of sneezeweed habitat in Augusta County.

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR's Natural Heritage staff. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, in Chapter IX.

Natural Heritage Program Conservation Priorities for PD 6:

81) Include the Ruskin Freer Natural Area in the planning and development of the **Blackwater Creek Natural Area.**

82) Protect additional lands around **Harriston Ponds Natural Area Preserve.**

83) Preserve the **Goshen Pass Natural Area and its adjacent lands.**

84) Protect the lands around **Cowbane Prairie Natural Area Preserve and **Folly Mills Fen Natural Area Preserve** in Augusta County and **Deep Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve** in Rockingham County.**

Transportation

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.
- Provide greater access to recreational sites through the development of alternative transportation facilities.
- Implement The Central Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Plan and incorporate recommendations in local plans.
- Continue development, adoption and implementation of the Bicycle Plan for the City of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Rockingham County and other localities.

85) Refine and clearly sign the location of the Trans-American Bike Trail (US Bike Route 76). Protect the corridor.

86) Improve bicycle/pedestrian access along **Route 11 to serve residents and visitors to the region.**

87) Create a designated bike route along **Route 220 between Monterey and Warm Springs.**

Local Parks and Recreation Departments

Parks and recreation departments serve all of the localities in the Central Shenandoah Planning Region. The urbanized areas within PD 6 have a better supply of recreational facilities, both in terms of quality and quantity. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on

Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year ending June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Augusta County \$16.78, Bath County \$86.19, Highland County \$13.27, Rockbridge County \$28.31, Rockingham County \$18.55, Lexington \$52.91, Staunton \$154.45, Waynesboro \$72.84, Buena Vista \$193.69, and Harrisonburg \$89.21. The budgetary and actual expenditures for the region indicate that the average spending for recreation is \$72.62. The counties average expenditure is \$36.00, which is well below the statewide county average of \$43.75. However, two of the highest per capita statewide spending are in Buena Vista and Staunton, which distorts the PD overall average. With average expenditures statewide in cities at \$76.45, PD is well above with an average of \$118.47.

Local & Regional Parks & Recreation Recommendations

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools, and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores. http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks
- Localities need to create clear signage; including readable maps of facilities and resources for public use.
- When private recreational lands convert to other uses the localities need to add the services provided by those sites.
- Create satellite law enforcement stations near large recreation facilities.
- As demographics change, provisions need to be made for nontraditional recreation facilities, like skate parks and spray parks.
- Continue development, adoption and implementation of Rockbridge and Augusta County Recreational Plans, which incorporate Bicycle Plan for the City of Harrisonburg, the Blacks Run Greenway, the Waynesboro Greenway Plan, and, and the Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan, Sunset Park in Waynesboro,

and Glen Maury Park Master Plan, and development of community recreation facilities, pocket parks and trail connections.

- Support the Augusta County Master Recreational Plan.
- The City of Harrisonburg needs to develop a plan for identifying and acquiring open space to meet the demands of its citizens

Specific Local and Regional Park Recommendations

88) Expand facilities at **Highland Park** to meet the demand of outdoor recreation participants; including a recreational center, pool and trails.

89) Support and develop **Sunset Park** in Waynesboro.

Other Federal & State Lands

90) Protect and preserve the **Shenandoah Valley Battlefield National Historic District (SVBNHD)**, which Congress created through enacting legislation in 1997, through implementation of its general management plan. The legislation authorized a commission whose charge was to develop a plan to promote the protection and continued appreciation of the historic, cultural and natural resources that are associated with the battlefields and are important to the people of the region, the Shenandoah Valley and the nation. The district contains some of the most remarkable and intact Civil War battlefields in the United States. The landscapes of the valley, its natural beauty, farm, small towns and tradition makes it one of the most "characteristically American" regions in the country. More than 325-armed conflicts took place in the eight counties (including Highland, Rockingham and Augusta counties plus cities and towns in PD 6) that comprise the SVBNHD and lay at the heart of the struggle. According to the management plan, about 70% of the core areas identified in the management plan retain their original integrity, while only about 7% of those areas are in some way protected. Today the district remains a vital, yet vulnerable national resource. The partners should continue to protect the critical resources of the district, before development pressures compromise the key resources. Further, the plan includes recommendations that need to be implemented in order to protect fragile resources, provide visitor information services, interpret particular sites, and identify battlefield tour routes that enable visitors to travel among the visitor service centers.

The following state-owned lands contain significant undeveloped open space that may have some potential for local recreational use. Each site should be assessed and, where appropriate, some form of cooperative agreement should be developed, making these resources available for local use as parks and open space.

91) Assess the potential to extend trails to and into the 60 acres of undeveloped open space known as the **Lackey Farm**, owned by Virginia Military Institute (VMI) located behind Rockbridge High School for greenways/recreational purposes.

92) **Western State Hospital** in Augusta County contains nearly 400 acres. Because the site appears to be less than 50% developed, the potential exists for some type of joint use agreement. The hospital staff began development of an internal trail system in 1994. These facilities may offer some additional opportunities for use by the surrounding community.

93) **McCormick Farm** in Rockbridge County contains more than 600 acres of open space. The Cyrus McCormick Museum is operated on the property.

94) The **White Tract owned by Virginia Military Institute (VMI)** in Rockbridge County contains more than 60 acres of undeveloped open space.

95) The opportunity exists to develop or expand outdoor recreation opportunities at the **Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center** in Augusta County. Greater utilization of this resource could benefit the center as well as area residents.

96) The opportunity exists for expanded recreational facilities at the **Blue Ridge Community College**.

Private Sector Recommendations

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Within Region 2000, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Many of the needs could be met through the efforts of private enterprise, organizations or through partnerships and cooperative efforts by the private sector and units of governments.

The private sector has numerous opportunities to become involved in the recreation-tourism economic activities that result from the region's unique natural, cultural, and historic resources. The increased demand for facilities to house, feed, and provide services to the millions of visitors is obvious. The private sector will provide most of the future development of golf courses, pools, and other similar facilities. The ecotourism related demands for the Central Shenandoah Valley are steadily increasing. Many of the significant battlefields from the Civil War remain in private ownership. The Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation will rely heavily on public-private partnerships in order to implement the many recommendations found in the Management Plan for protecting these historic areas and helping to meet the ever-increasing demands generated by Civil War enthusiasts. Private companies support the most of the demand for canoes and other recreational watercraft for visitors seeking to explore the legendary South Fork of the Shenandoah, the James and Maury Rivers. However, additional opportunities exist to provide access points and visitor accommodations.

The following recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.
- Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, shooting ranges, camping, fishing, and boating access.
- Eco-tourism could be linked to bed and breakfast opportunities, nursery and garden center operations, game farms and historical restorations. This concept should be expanded to farmers markets, pick-your-own operations, wineries and craft fairs. Private sector operations reinforce public programs and opportunities and result in economic growth for the region.
- Develop a year-round recreational campground that will capitalize on the growing eco-tourism sector in the county.
- Encourage partnerships with private and public organizations to open lands for multi-use trails for the public.
- Encourage private sector development of campgrounds.